



Living Parks

A sustainable visitation strategy

Living Parks – Conserve, Explore, Experience



South East Forest National Park.

M. van Ewijk © DEC

Front Cover: New England National Park.

J. Little © DEC

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Minister's message



The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) manages more than 650 protected areas on behalf of the people of NSW, which cover 6.5 million hectares, and represent 8 per cent of the land area of New South Wales.

This includes national parks, World Heritage Areas, rainforests, beaches, culturally significant places and alpine areas. The NPWS manages land representing many of our most important natural environments, including sites of great cultural significance, as well as some of our most highly valued recreation and tourism sites.

The NPWS also jointly manages over 160,000 hectares of marine parks in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries through the Marine Parks Authority. These unique and outstanding areas are set aside to conserve marine biological diversity and maintain ecological processes.

NSW parks provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, escaping urban life and just appreciating Australia's natural and cultural heritage. The Living Parks sustainable visitation strategy recognises the importance of parks for people. NSW parks are living parks – they are a part of local communities and part of our Australian culture.

Through excellence in visitor management, facilities and services, Living Parks aims to enhance the experience of park visitors and improve community awareness of the natural and cultural heritage values of the state's parks.

NSW parks host some 22 million visits each year, helping to attract visitors to Australia, Sydney and regional locations in NSW and directly assisting the NSW economy.

However, a balance is needed to ensure the sustainable conservation and management of our parks for now and for the future. Providing for public visitation, while protecting the natural and cultural values people come to experience, has remained an enduring challenge for park managers in Australia and

around the world. Visiting our parks is a highly prized experience, and people come because they want to enjoy the environment. The better we look after the environment, the better the experience will be.

Living Parks delivers the NSW Government's promise to produce an ecotourism plan for NSW parks. It represents a Government commitment to conserving and protecting unique natural and cultural values, while ensuring sustainable and culturally appropriate visitation to our precious parks. Through the Living Parks strategy, the NPWS will also work with the Marine Parks Authority to manage visitors in marine parks.

The best visitor facilities are often those that are unobtrusive — they do their job by allowing visitors to experience the environment without distraction and without damage. Park facilities are not an end in themselves; they are a means to help each visitor get the most from their experience.

Living Parks provides opportunities to establish new partnerships between the NPWS, the private and public sectors, Aboriginal communities and the general community. It also provides a framework to facilitate sustainable investment in NSW parks, to provide benefits for local and regional economies and to generate opportunities for Aboriginal involvement in visitation management.

The implementation of Living Parks will seek to protect and conserve the precious natural and cultural values of our parks and ensure that diverse, high quality opportunities for visitors remain and are enhanced for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Debus', written in a cursive style.

Bob Debus
NSW Minister for the Environment

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VISION

Visitors enjoy, experience and appreciate our parks while park values are conserved and protected

Why Living Parks?

Our parks are the cornerstone of biological diversity, cultural heritage and natural environment conservation in NSW. They contribute to our wellbeing both directly and indirectly. Parks provide a natural setting to relax, be adventurous and explore. People using our parks contribute to regional economies, helping to create jobs in local communities. Parks are a part of our way of life.

NSW parks are managed on behalf of the people of NSW by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), which is part of the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).

Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, the NPWS is responsible for:

- ensuring the conservation of nature, including habitats, ecosystems, biological diversity, significant landforms and landscapes
- conserving objects, places or features of cultural value within the landscape, including those of significance to Aboriginal people, places of historic significance and of social value to the people of NSW
- fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of natural and cultural heritage and their conservation
- providing for the management of parks according to each park category's management principles.

The Living Parks sustainable visitation strategy provides the framework for managing the sustainable and culturally appropriate use of our parks.

'Sustainable and culturally appropriate' means visitor use that:

- is in line with the objectives under which the lands or waters are reserved
- is consistent with the principles for ecologically sustainable development (see Definitions)
- does not threaten the protection and conservation of an area's natural and cultural values
- provides an overall benefit to the community in the short and long term.

Through the delivery of quality visitor services and improved visitor management, the NPWS aims to improve experiences and enhance awareness of the natural and cultural heritage values of NSW's parks.

Living Parks also supports sustainable investment in the state's parks to provide benefits for local and regional economies and to generate opportunities for Aboriginal involvement.

Living Parks aims to achieve the following:

- protection and conservation of park values
- enhanced visitor experiences
- ecologically sustainable and culturally appropriate visitor use
- excellence in visitor management
- enhanced community health and wellbeing
- economic benefits for communities.

Living Parks builds on the Towards 2020 – New South Wales Tourism Masterplan, the Government's commitment to the future of tourism in NSW. The Tourism Masterplan is a whole-of-government strategy that identifies issues likely to confront the state as a visitor destination and outlines how the NSW Government will work with the tourism industry to position the state to achieve its tourism potential.

The Masterplan's 'Nature in Tourism' plan will provide the strategic principles and directions for the development, delivery and management of nature-based tourism in NSW.

How will it work?

Living Parks provides broad strategic direction and establishes principles for visitor management. It sets state-wide priorities and desired outcomes, and identifies actions to achieve them.

Living Parks will be delivered through a state-wide implementation plan supported by branch visitation management plans for the four geographic NPWS field branches (Northern, Southern, Central and Western).

The implementation plan will detail how the NPWS intends to deliver the priority actions in Living Parks at state, regional and local levels.

The branch visitation management plans will aim to provide a visitor management framework for guiding recreation

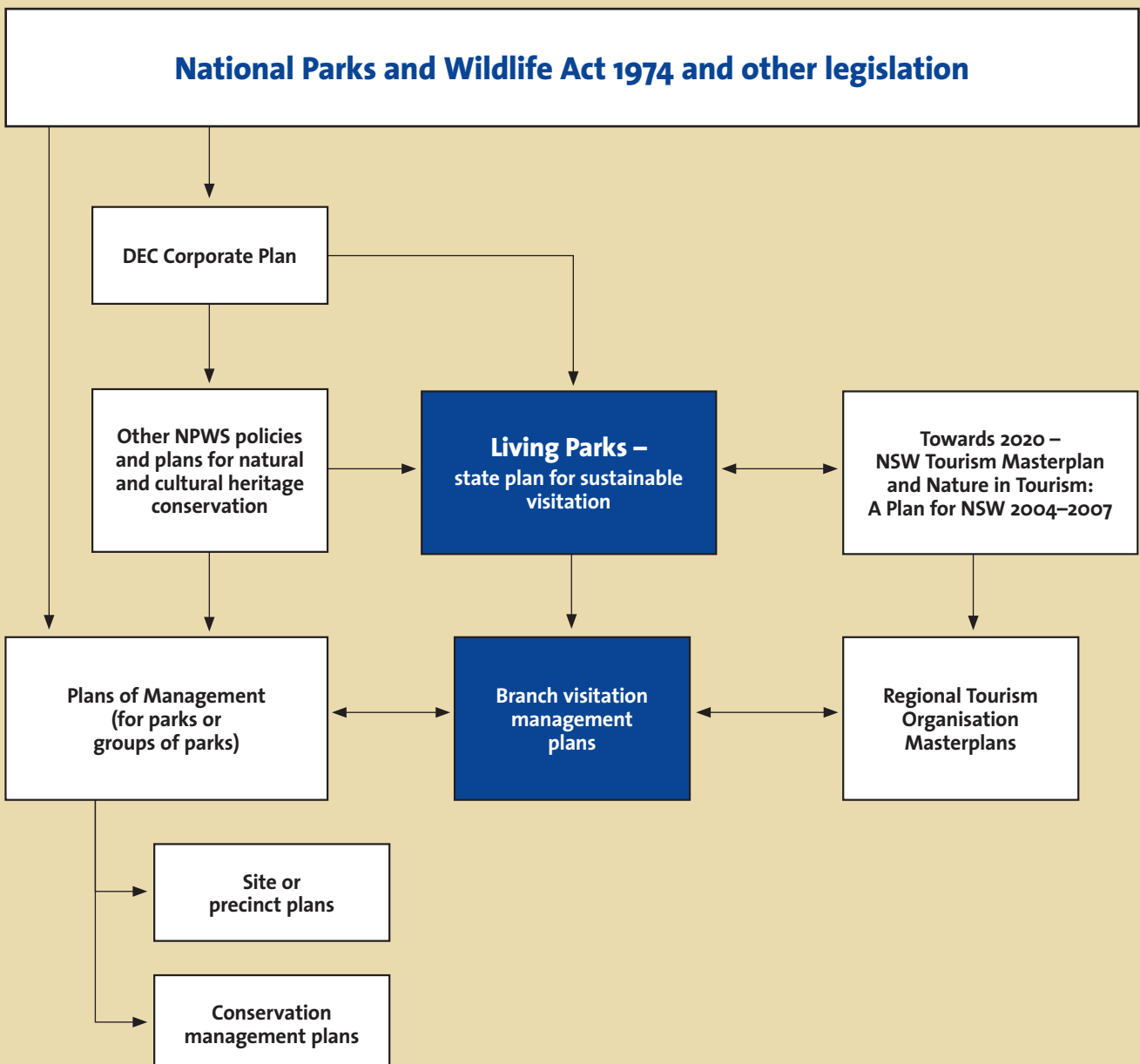
opportunities that balance natural, cultural and community values. Branch plans will be closely aligned with the statutory park plans of management and will be developed in consultation with NPWS Regional Advisory Committees.

Reflecting the principles of adaptive management, ongoing monitoring and evaluation will ensure the effective implementation of Living Parks. Implementation of Living Parks will be reported in the DEC Annual Report.

Figure 1 illustrates the planning context for Living Parks. Living Parks will run for the duration of the Towards 2020 – New South Wales Tourism Masterplan and will be reviewed initially after three years.

Figure 1

Living Parks planning context



Our parks system

Approximately 6.5 million hectares of land is reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, representing 8 per cent of the land area of NSW. The park system is made up of a number of different park categories: national parks, regional parks, nature reserves, state conservation areas, Aboriginal areas, historic sites, karst conservation reserves, and marine parks. These parks offer a diversity of experiences for visitors and they include some of the state's finest scenery, protected landscapes and native plants and animals. Our parks have significance to the Aboriginal peoples of NSW and provide places for Aboriginal communities to practise and teach their culture. They also protect cultural heritage important to the broader community.

The values of our parks

When Australia's first national park was established in 1879 on the southern edge of Sydney (now the Royal National Park), it was as a "national domain for rest and recreation" designed to "ensure the sound health and vigour of the community". Showing considerable insight, the park managers predicted that "in the not far distant future it will stand as a beautiful reserve, possessing undisturbed the best of its natural grandeur in the midst of a dense population..."

NSW parks have a long and proud history of providing a diverse range of experiences and facilities for visitors to enjoy and learn about their rich natural and cultural heritage. Parks have long been a significant element in our society's recreational and leisure environment and have helped to shape strong social commitments to conservation and outdoor recreation. Parks are also central to the state's tourism industry for premier natural and cultural tourism experiences and provide a significant focus for many regional economies.

Natural values

NSW parks encompass some of the most scenic and biologically diverse lands in the state. Nearly 40 per cent of our beautiful coastline and many of our estuaries and lakes are within parks. The Great Dividing Range and its spectacular escarpment are protected in parks stretching unbroken from the Victorian border to the Hunter Valley. West of the Divide, rugged hills, winding rivers, seasonal lakes and dune fields are all represented in parks. Mountains and snowfields, wild rivers and alpine forests are protected forever in Kosciuszko National Park.

Cultural values

Parks also protect some of the state's most culturally significant places from the iconic Fort Denison, Mungo Woolshed and the chain of lighthouses running from Eden to Byron Bay, to important examples of our rural, mining and forestry heritage. Parks conserve and provide public access to a wide diversity of places including the Davidson Whaling Station in Eden, the goldrush town of Hill End, huts in Kosciuszko National Park, the pastoral property at Willandra National Park and the fortifications on Bare Island in Botany Bay National Park. Parks protect landscapes and places of great importance to the Aboriginal communities of NSW. These include stone

arrangements, art sites, burial places, midden sites and scarred trees as well as features in the landscape of spiritual significance such as mountains, waterholes, islands and other features associated with important stories and events. The NPWS is committed to managing those places sensitively and in partnership with those communities.

Economic values

NSW parks are being increasingly recognised for their potential to encourage economic activity in rural and regional areas. Expenditure by people visiting parks and expenditure on park management encourages economic activity and generates employment. In the case of Sturt, Kinchega and Mutawintji National Parks in the state's far west, expenditure by the NPWS and park visitors contributes an estimated \$5.5 million per year to the economy of this region.

Each year, the alpine resorts, which occupy less than one per cent of Kosciuszko National Park, provide enjoyment to over one million visitors and make a significant contribution to the economy of the alpine region of NSW. Kosciuszko National Park is unique, as it is the only park in NSW that contains significant alpine landscapes and alpine resorts. The NSW Government and the NPWS are committed to fostering the sustainable management of these resorts (Appendix).

Social values

NSW parks provide a range of social benefits, including recreation, tourism, education and social interaction between groups, families and others. They also support community wellbeing and provide opportunities for improving general community health through outdoor recreation.

Parks provide the opportunity in many areas for people to establish or continue their connections with the land. For Aboriginal people in particular, parks provide an important venue for practising culture and passing on cultural knowledge and tradition. Parks also provide examples to the community of natural landscapes and ecological systems.

Research has shown that visiting a park can lower blood pressure and improve mental wellbeing. Spending time in a park environment leads to greater health and fitness for individuals and the communities they live in.

Who visits parks?

NSW parks receive approximately 22 million visits each year, primarily from Australia, making them one of the state's most significant tourism destinations. People visit parks primarily to enjoy and experience nature. Other reasons include rest, relaxation or respite from everyday routine, tranquillity, recreation, sightseeing and socialising. The most important factors visitors perceive as affecting the quality of their experiences are the 'natural features' and the 'unspoilt nature' of park environments (TTF 2004).

Visitors expect a range of settings, experiences, facilities and services reflecting wide-ranging outdoor interests. Some want solitude or adventure with few facilities or constraints. Some want to enjoy the bush but expect basic facilities or simply want a nice outdoor setting for a picnic. Others may prefer to be guided by a tour operator or park staff. Some may be looking for a cultural experience, whether it's learning about the unique cultural values of our parks or meeting and participating in cultural traditions.

The potential for future growth in natural and cultural tourism is substantial. It's therefore also important for park managers to understand future trends in visitor use of parks. This will be critical for the adaptive management of parks and for building the capacity to manage changes and shifts in visitation patterns and park usage.

The Three Sisters, Blue Mountains National Park.

S. Cottrell © DEC

Types of parks

National parks protect and conserve outstanding or representative ecosystems, natural and cultural features, landscapes, geoheritage and sites that provide opportunities for public appreciation and inspiration, sustainable visitor use, education, enjoyment and sustainable use of historic buildings or modified natural areas.

*The World Heritage-status **Blue Mountains National Park** is visited by three million people each year. At the easily accessible Echo Point, visitors come to see the famous Three Sisters, a place of significant local and Australian cultural history, and the beautiful sandstone walls surrounding the Jamison Valley. To cater for the large number of visitors to this site, the NPWS and Blue Mountains City Council provide facilities such as a visitor centre, car and bus parking, lookouts and historically significant walking tracks.*

The Blue Mountains are rich in cultural heritage, both Aboriginal and post-settlement. The Three Sisters are part of the Seven Sisters – Muggadah Dreaming, a story spanning thousands of years and linking other important Aboriginal dreaming sites and people across Australia. Even the walking tracks, used by visitors to the area for over a century, are of great heritage significance.

Blue Mountains National Park also provides opportunities to experience remote and undeveloped places in declared wilderness, accessible by hikes of a day or more. A range of recreational activities can be enjoyed in the park, from a peaceful picnic or leisurely bushwalk to more adventurous overnight hiking, mountain biking, abseiling, rock climbing or canyoning.



D. Perryman © DEC



Kosciuszko National Park is one of the world's great national parks and, at almost 690,000 hectares, the largest in NSW. It contains the highest mountains in Australia, the famous Snowy River and all of the NSW ski fields. Its attractions include walks through alpine herb fields; spectacular caves and limestone gorges; scenic drives; and historic huts and homesteads. One of the Australian Alps national parks, Kosciuszko is nationally and internationally recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. It contains six wilderness areas, and its alpine and sub-alpine areas protect plant species found nowhere else in the world.

Popular summer activities in Kosciuszko National Park include camping, bushwalking, cycling, fishing and visiting caves. There are also many picnic areas, which are easily accessible by road.

The alpine resorts and ski fields occupy less than one per cent of Kosciuszko National Park, but each year they provide enjoyment to over one million visitors and make a significant contribution to the economy of the alpine region and the state. The NSW Government has a longstanding commitment to protect the natural and cultural values of Kosciuszko National Park and ensure that alpine resorts are developed and operated in an ecologically sustainable manner. An environmental management system has been developed for the park and the Government has undertaken public consultation on a new draft Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management and the Exposure Alpine Resorts Regional Environment Plan.

Regional parks protect and conserve areas in a natural or modified landscape that are suitable for sustainable public recreation, enjoyment and the use of historic buildings or modified natural areas.

E. Sierins © Max Dupain and Associates courtesy of Phillips/Marler



In recent years the landscape surrounding the historic **Rouse Hill House**, built between 1813 and 1818, has been gradually transformed from paddocks to parkland to service the rapidly growing north-west suburbs of Sydney. Picnic and barbecue facilities are available; tracks for cycling, walking and inline skating explore the park; and adventure play equipment is available for toddlers and teenagers. Visitors are welcome to walk their dog on a leash within the park.

Stage One of the **Coffs Coast Regional Park** covers 360 hectares, extending over 23 kilometres of coastline and including lands acquired through the Coastal Lands Protection Scheme. The Coffs Harbour Council and the NPWS manage these important areas of coastal vegetation as a whole ecosystem, focusing on protecting cultural heritage values and threatened species; fire management; eradicating weeds and feral animals; and providing recreation infrastructure, such as the Solitary Islands Coastal Walk. The regional park is of high conservation value and contains rare coastal forest ecosystems and important habitat for a range of threatened fauna. The park also protects high quality habitats for two threatened plant species *Thesium australe* and *Zieria prostrata*, which are endemic to the Coffs Coast.

Perched on the dramatic eastern escarpment of the Great Dividing Range near Coffs Harbour, **Dorrigo National Park** contains magnificent stands of lush rainforest and spectacular mountain scenery. It was included on the World Heritage list in 1986 as part of the Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves of Australia, in recognition of its exceptional natural beauty and outstanding value to science and conservation. **Dorrigo Rainforest Centre** is the gateway to the park, where you can venture out on the Skywalk above the green of the rainforest canopy for breathtaking views of the Bellinger Valley and the Pacific Ocean beyond.

Dorrigo National Park is one of Australia's most accessible World Heritage Areas. A short stroll takes visitors into the tranquil rainforest and longer walks lead to stunning waterfalls. Visitors can find out more about the rainforest on a Discovery tour or be delighted by early morning encounters with lyrebirds, rainforest pigeons, noisy pittas and colourful parrots, while red-necked pademelons can be seen grazing in the picnic areas at dusk.

J Nobes © DEC



Nature reserves are areas of special scientific interest that protect and conserve areas containing outstanding, unique or representative ecosystems, species, communities, or natural and cultural features. Unlike other park categories, nature reserves do not normally provide visitor facilities.

© DEC



Towra Point Nature Reserve protects the largest and most diverse estuarine wetland complex remaining in the Sydney region and has been declared a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. It is an important feeding and resting area for numerous internationally migrating wading birds. An Aboriginal Place has been declared at Towra Point to protect an Aboriginal re-burial site. Due to the unique and sensitive nature of this environment, access to the reserve is only provided through educational tours.

Boorganna Nature Reserve is the second oldest in NSW. A small area around Rawson Falls was dedicated in 1904 for the preservation of native flora and public recreation. Boorganna now protects 396 hectares of diverse vegetation communities, ranging from eucalypt forest to luxuriant sub-tropical rainforest. It is a significant remnant of the extensive rainforest that once covered the Comboyne Plateau. The reserve is popular for bird watching, picnicking and the 2.7 kilometre walk that descends to Rawson Lookout and on to Rawson Falls.

K. Bayer © DEC



State conservation areas protect and conserve significant ecosystems, landforms, natural phenomena or places of cultural significance, while providing opportunities for sustainable visitation, enjoyment and use of buildings or modified landscapes. In addition to their conservation values, some state conservation areas have significant mineral values, and exploration and mining may be permitted.

P. Rebeck © DEC



Dharawal State Conservation Area protects part of the Woronora Plateau, west of the Illawarra Escarpment. The plateau supports a complex and diverse range of threatened species and vegetation communities, including upland swamps, shale forests and western gully forests (which are prime koala habitat). To protect its pristine catchment values, the park is accessible only by foot or bicycle via an extensive network of management trails. Vehicles are not permitted.

Barrington Tops State Conservation Area is on the Barrington Tops Plateau, the highest plateau outside of the Australian Alps. This area has many rare and endangered plant and animal species and sub-alpine swamps (such as Polblue Swamp), which are an endangered ecological community. Barrington Tops is close to Newcastle and Sydney and offers a range of recreational opportunities including camping, picnicking, bushwalking, mountain biking, 4WD and 2WD touring, and fishing. The state conservation area is adjacent to the World Heritage-listed Barrington Tops National Park.

J. Moffat © DEC



Historic sites protect and conserve areas associated with a person, event or historical theme (including Aboriginal people), or that contain a building, place, feature or landscape of cultural significance. They provide opportunities for visitor enjoyment and the sustainable use of buildings or modified natural areas.

K. Gillet © DEC



Hill End Historic Site is a living village featuring intact gold rush streetscapes and buildings dating back to the 1860s. Visitors can re-live the early goldmining days of 19th-century New South Wales. Activities include camping, self-guided tours of the town, tours of Bald Hill Tourist Mine and visits to the town's visitor centre and museum.

Aboriginal areas protect and conserve areas associated with a person, event or historical theme, or that contain a building, place, object, feature or landscape of natural or cultural significance to Aboriginal people or of importance in improving public understanding of Aboriginal culture and its development. They're managed in accordance with the cultural values of the Aboriginal people whose heritage they protect and may be used by Aboriginal people for cultural purposes.

The headland complex of Aboriginal middens in **Murramarang Aboriginal Area** is important to local Aboriginal communities, as well as being scientifically significant. The site is the largest on the south coast and is one of only three known to be older than 10,000 years. It contains a dense concentration of stone objects, shells, and bones from birds, fish and mammals. The variety of tool types, including rare bone tools, illustrates the long history of its occupation. The park's self-guided walking track has panoramic views of the coastline, Brush Island, Durras Mountain and the hinterland ranges.

J. Miller © DEC



Karst conservation reserves protect and conserve areas, including subterranean land, containing outstanding or representative examples of karst (limestone) landforms and natural phenomena (such as limestone caves). These parks also offer opportunities for sustainable visitor use, education and enjoyment that is compatible with the natural and cultural values of the park. There are four karst conservation reserves in NSW, including the magnificent Jenolan Caves Karst Conservation Reserve which will soon be managed by NPWS.

Courtesy Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust



The **Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve** protects Australia's most impressive limestone caves. This special and fragile landscape has been created over millions of years and its importance is reflected by its inclusion in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Jenolan receives over 250,000 visitors a year, making it the most popular tourist destination in country NSW. Visitors enjoy the spectacular cave formations and underground rivers of the nine show caves, which they can experience through a guided tour. There are also opportunities for adventure caving, bushwalking and picnicking.

Marine parks are jointly managed by the NPWS, in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries, through the Marine Parks Authority. Over 160,000 hectares of unique and outstanding marine areas are protected by marine parks, set aside to conserve marine biological diversity and to maintain ecological processes. Marine parks may also provide for ecologically sustainable fishing, as well as public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment. Marine parks can be zoned, including ‘no-take’ sanctuary zones, to further enhance conservation. There are currently four marine parks in NSW, offering a variety of outstanding marine areas for visitors to enjoy.

M. Cufer © DEC



*The diverse marine life of **Cape Byron Marine Park** includes many species of dolphins, seabirds and fish, as well as threatened little terns and leatherback turtles. Cape Byron is a multiple-use marine park that includes protected areas where fishing and collecting is prohibited, and general use areas that support ecologically sustainable commercial and recreational fishing.*

Special designations

Parts of the formal reserve system are further protected by designations that overlay other park categories:

Wilderness areas are declared so that the natural process of evolution can continue over large areas, ensuring biological diversity is conserved for the future. Wilderness areas are open to the public for restricted activities such as remote area bushwalking, swimming, camping, photography, fishing, bird watching, picnicking, enjoying the scenery and rock climbing. Large areas of wilderness are protected in reserves such as Kosciuszko, Wollemi, Blue Mountains and Barrington Tops national parks.

World Heritage places are recognised by the international community as outstanding examples of the world’s natural and/or cultural heritage.

Wild rivers may be declared where a river and its catchment have biological, hydrological and geomorphological processes in a condition substantially unmodified since colonisation of NSW. In managing wild rivers, we aim to maintain and restore their condition and also identify, conserve and protect Aboriginal objects and places.

Ramsar wetlands are globally significant wetland sites, protected by international convention. In managing Ramsar sites, we aim to preserve their unique ecological characteristics.

Action plan

Priority 1 actions are essential for achieving the key outcomes in Living Parks.

Priority 2 actions are supporting actions or actions that will be undertaken as capacity allows.

Many of the priority actions have already commenced. Where appropriate, reference is made to relevant actions in the Tourism Masterplan and to other organisations which may need to be involved in implementing the actions.

1. Protection and conservation

Guiding principles

- Natural and cultural values of protected areas are conserved.
- Facilities and services associated with visitors are managed to ensure that they are environmentally sustainable and culturally appropriate.
- Visitor use promotes awareness of conservation.

Outcome 1.1: Visitation planning and management to conserve park values are coordinated and integrated.

The NPWS must plan park management effectively so visitors can continue to enjoy their experience, while natural and cultural values continue to be protected.

Visitor planning must recognise that parks are part of a broader biological, physical and social landscape. Visitor planning must be integrated with planning for other land tenures and link closely with regional tourism strategies. Adopting a regional approach to visitor management provides a greater opportunity for giving visitors a variety of experiences while achieving better conservation outcomes.

Appropriate visitor numbers, facilities, infrastructure and services are determined based on consideration of park conservation objectives, research and integrated planning.

A precautionary approach to management is adopted, to ensure that park values are conserved and Aboriginal cultural sensitivities are respected.

Actions	Priority
<p>1. Prepare NPWS branch visitation management plans, based on branch boundaries but taking into account regional tourism boundaries, which will guide planning and resourcing for visitation management and the implementation of Living Parks. The aim of these plans is to provide a framework for visitor management, guiding recreation opportunities that balance natural, cultural and community values. This includes guiding decisions regarding investment and resources for visitor management; providing a strategic overview of regional recreational opportunities; providing a basis for determining what recreational uses and facilities are generally appropriate for parks; and ensuring sensitive areas are identified and protected from inappropriate use or development.</p> <p>A review of recreational opportunities within each region, across all land tenures, will be undertaken to inform the development of the branch plans. The review is to identify existing and projected visitation needs, conservation values, environmental limitations, gaps in existing opportunities, education opportunities, potential conflicts, and management options and priorities. [In consultation with DPI, DOP, local government, DTSR, NPWS Regional Advisory Committees]</p>	1
<p>2. Consult key state and local government open-space and recreation providers and local tourism associations during the preparation of NPWS park plans of management [Action 1.1.11 Tourism Masterplan]. Ensure that the strategic review of the plan of management process considers issues of visitor management.</p>	1
<p>3. Identify park users and park use/recreation demands to support current and future park planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – conduct surveys to identify the information needs of visitors (including ethnically diverse communities) and non-visitors, commercial tour operators and potential partners – develop and implement a state-wide visitor data system that includes frequency counts, visitor satisfaction levels, impacts (eg environmental, economic, social and cultural) and services. 	1
<p>4. Develop a program to monitor and research visitation impacts and develop management strategies.</p>	1

**Outcome 1.2:
Commercial uses associated with visitor use are consistent with park management objectives.**

Commercial operators can improve visitor experiences through the use of trained and experienced staff, delivering appropriate programs and communicating appropriate information. This can in turn lead to improved park conservation outcomes.

Commercial activities must enhance or complement, rather than duplicate, existing facilities or services, as well as adding to visitor enjoyment and appreciation of park values.

Commercial activities operate according to conservation policies and plans of management to ensure sustainability and to minimise negative impacts on park values. This may include the need to limit the number of commercial operations in environmentally or culturally sensitive locations.

The NPWS aims to manage commercial use of parks via an efficient and effective licensing system that encourages industry to pursue high performance standards, including accreditation.

Actions	Priority
5. Develop an efficient and effective commercial operator licensing system that improves the regulatory process while also providing incentives for accreditation of commercial operators and encouraging the delivery of products that meet excellence in management standards of park management. [Actions 2.1.2, 2.1.3 and 2.2.4 Tourism Masterplan, Nature in Tourism Plan] [In consultation with DTSR]	1
6. Develop codes of conduct, operating standards and quality management systems for products and services delivered by commercial operators. [In consultation with DTSR, industry, NPW Aboriginal Heritage Advisory Council & NPW Advisory Council]	1
7. Encourage and promote cultural awareness training for tour operators and consultation with local Aboriginal communities regarding tours to places of cultural significance.	1
8. Develop presentation standards for use by NPWS and the tourism industry, to ensure marketing accurately communicates the values of the parks, presents a realistic picture of opportunities that are consistent with management objectives and presents park history and Aboriginal culture in an appropriate manner. [In consultation with DTSR, DAA & NPW AHAC]	2

**Outcome 1.3:
Facilities, infrastructure and services are designed to be environmentally sustainable.**

Environmentally sustainable design principles and practices will be implemented in park management.

New facilities and amenities should be in harmony with the natural settings; not impact on cultural values; be distinct from heritage structures; be functional and address visitor needs; enhance the visual landscape through sound aesthetic design; be inviting and accessible; be energy and water efficient; and utilise recyclable and renewable materials where practical.

Facilities should be provided to maintain the natural setting as far as possible and to respect cultural sensitivities in both the design and siting. Actions that modify the natural setting, such as site hardening, need to be undertaken judiciously to mitigate impacts.

This may require locating facilities, infrastructure and services for visitors outside of, or on the perimeter of, parks, or restricting them to defined precincts within parks.

Actions	Priority
9. Develop and implement a 'Park Facilities Manual' to ensure a consistent look and feel is created within all parks. The manual will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – provide the basis for the design, detailing and locations of built elements such as seats, signs, amenities buildings, tracks, trails and lookouts within visitor precincts – reflect modern Australian vernacular architecture that ensures a consistent corporate image while adapting to local environmental conditions – recognise that minimisation of environmental impacts is of central importance to the design of park facilities. [Action 4.3.2 Tourism Masterplan]	1
10. Implement excellence in environmental management for visitor facilities and infrastructure, such as energy efficiency, water conservation and waste minimisation.	1

2. Enjoyment, understanding and appreciation

Guiding principles

- Information and interpretation are integral to visitor understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural values of parks and in making informed choices about recreation opportunities.
- Visitation is planned regionally, taking into account visitor opportunities across all land tenures.
- A range of opportunities are provided for visitors to experience the diversity of natural and cultural heritage values found in NSW parks.
- Equitable opportunities are provided for all to enjoy NSW parks, including people with disabilities or from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- Visitor facilities and services are managed to a standard of excellence that takes into account national and international benchmarks.
- Marketing of parks and other communication regarding parks is culturally sensitive and consistent with conservation of the parks system's natural and cultural values.

Outcome 2.1: Visitors are better informed of the opportunities offered within parks, and information provided enhances visitor experiences, understanding and appreciation.

Enjoyment of parks and appreciation of their values requires good quality, culturally sensitive information that helps people to make decisions about their visit. This information needs to cover:

- potential destinations: location, access, heritage values, unique features and contact details for park offices
- available opportunities and facilities: what activities can be undertaken, any restrictions on activities and why they are necessary
- access requirements: disabled access, park entry fees, permits or equipment that might be needed.

The NPWS recognises that many different communities enjoy the diverse landscapes it manages. The NPWS needs to build a strong relationship with ethnically diverse communities, to maintain future broad community support for parks and conservation.

Information material should have a multicultural dimension, to improve multicultural communities' understanding of what parks offer and encourage them to visit parks. The NPWS should convey conservation messages and explain the different roles of open space across the landscape in a number of languages.

Education and interpretation of parks will aim to increase visitor understanding of our natural and cultural heritage.

This will improve visitors' experiences of parks and may enhance support for conservation. Information will be provided to encourage visitors to take greater responsibility for their actions and to minimise their impact on the environment.

Commercial tour operators also require good information so they can provide a better experience, convey conservation and educational messages and comply with any regulation or permit requirements.

Some activities undertaken by park visitors and commercial tour operators have inherent risks, for example, adventure activities and remote area hiking and camping. Efforts will be made to assist visitors with information to ensure they understand the risks and can take appropriate precautions.

Actions		Priority
11.	Provide quality visitor information including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – revising existing information material (brochures, maps, internet etc) to address visitor needs and achieve consistency in the look and feel of visitor information – reviewing the role of visitor centres, education centres and regional office information centres to ensure alignment with NPWS objectives, achieve a consistent look and feel, and provide effective services and opportunities for accreditation. [Action 3.5.4 Tourism Masterplan, Nature in Tourism Plan]	1 2
12.	Develop and implement interpretation and education policy and guidelines to increase visitor understanding of natural and cultural heritage (eg for publications, internet, regional touring guides, <i>Discovery</i> programs, and commercial operator licensing). [Action 3.5.13 Tourism Masterplan]	1
13.	Update the Visitor Safety Policy to provide guidance on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – commercial operator responsibilities – preparing risk management plans for parks [Action 4.3.3 Tourism Masterplan] – providing safety information for visitors and commercial tour operators – increasing visitor risk awareness. 	1
14.	Develop improved visitor services, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – providing on-line booking arrangements for camping facilities, tours and <i>Discovery</i> programs – improving access to visitor and educational information for people of non-English speaking backgrounds, sight/hearing impaired etc – providing on-line information for commercial tour operators, explaining licence requirements and standards, and providing contact details – ensuring the NPWS website is easily accessible and informative. 	1

**Outcome 2.2:
The provision of a range of opportunities for visitors to enjoy, appreciate and learn about the state’s natural and cultural heritage.**

A range of opportunities will be provided within parks for visitors to experience the diverse natural and cultural heritage of NSW. For example, there will be opportunities for people who are less mobile or who lack independent transport, people who require modern facilities and those who seek solitary wilderness experiences. Not all opportunities can be offered by any one park.

Planning for visitor opportunities within parks will take into account and attempt to complement those provided by other landowners or managers in the region.

Opportunities for visitors will reflect that different cultures may have different ways of viewing nature and seek different park experiences.

Actions		Priority
15.	Ensure that equitable opportunities are provided for people with disabilities according to the principle of universal accessibility. [Action 1.1.14 Tourism Masterplan].	1
16.	Integrate the principles of multiculturalism into visitor management planning.	1
17.	Continue to support and participate in the NSW Government’s Healthy Parks Healthy People program. Develop strategic relationships with the health sector and monitor and report on the health and social benefits of visiting parks.	2
18.	Staff training will continue to incorporate Aboriginal and multicultural awareness.	1

**Outcome 2.3:
The provision of facilities necessary for delivering, presenting and protecting quality visitor experiences.**

Park managers will consider the relationship between park facilities and the people who use them.

Park managers need to consider what types of facilities are appropriate in different situations, including the quality, standard and maintenance of facilities required. The types of facilities provided will vary between parks, depending on their visitation and conservation needs.

Park managers will review and identify what facilities should be retained, repaired, replaced or removed.

Facilities and infrastructure, which allow better and more equitable access for visitors consistent with park management objectives, will be provided.

Facilities and services will be placed, designed and maintained to minimise risk to visitors and staff.

Actions		Priority
19.	Implement the NPWS Asset Maintenance System to ensure effective maintenance, replacement and safety of visitor infrastructure and facilities.	1
20.	Develop ‘visitor precinct’ plans to ensure effective development and management of visitor infrastructure and settings.	1

**Outcome 2.4:
A coordinated approach to the promotion and marketing of NSW parks.**

Promotion will be used to reinforce awareness of the need for conservation and sustainable use, to deliver specific conservation messages and to build support for NSW parks, even among non-visitors of parks. Promotion and marketing will be used to manage visitation and environmental impacts, particularly in sensitive environments or in parks that receive large numbers of visitors.

Effective communication is also required to manage publications about the NSW park system that are not produced by the NPWS. These publications may detail recreational opportunities and information needs to be accurate in order to avoid visitor disappointment.

Actions	Priority
21. Develop a Living Parks communication and marketing strategy, including partnerships, to promote NSW parks and park values. The strategy will include guidelines for identifying target markets and for developing key visitation experience themes for parks, or groups of parks, and key communication messages (eg conservation and minimal impact), principles for marketing and a communication strategy for managing private publications about parks. The strategy will also guide partnerships with other land managers, such as Forests NSW (a part of DPI), to undertake collaborative marketing of regional visitor and recreation opportunities across land tenures. [Actions 3.2.4 & 3.2.5 Tourism Masterplan, Nature in Tourism Plan] [In consultation with DTSR]	1

3. Partnerships

Guiding principles

- NSW parks can significantly contribute to regional and local economies and local communities.
- Consultation is the key to identifying the environmental, social and economic expectations of communities and visitors.
- Partnerships help to ensure the best outcomes for conservation and visitor enjoyment, and provision of ecologically sustainable and culturally appropriate services and facilities.
- Respect must be given to the rights and responsibilities of Aboriginal communities as the primary custodians and interpreters of their heritage.
- Access to country is important for Aboriginal people to maintain and teach culture, and maintain identity and community wellbeing.
- Commercial visitor operations within parks must be subject to consistent and clear conditions to protect conservation values.

Outcome 3.1:

Partnerships formed with the private, non-profit and public sectors provide benefits to all partners, enhance achievement of park conservation objectives, and further develop trust and understanding between partners.

Consultation is a key factor in identifying the environmental, social and economic expectations of local communities, informing visitor use management and providing appropriate visitor facilities and services. The NPWS will work with a range of partners to achieve park conservation objectives, enhance visitor experiences and increase understanding of

park conservation values. The NPWS will work in partnership with local communities, neighbours, Aboriginal communities, volunteer groups, conservation groups, research institutions and the tourism industry.

The NPWS will work with communities, other land managers and the tourism industry to meet the outcomes of the Living Parks program and will seek to involve visitors and peak stakeholder and interest groups in reserve planning and management. We will work in partnerships to identify and develop satisfaction with the role of the parks for recreation, education, equity of accessibility, impacts on the character of the area, safety issues, and traffic and to ensure the park does not compete with local businesses.

Actions	Priority
22. Establish stronger links between the tourism industry and other natural resource managers through [Nature in Tourism Plan]: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – involvement with local tourism association boards/committees and regional tourism organisations, particularly in regions with key visitor destinations – improving coordination of planning and activities across land tenures through regular meetings with other government agencies with responsibilities related to recreation and tourism, such as DTSR, DOP, DNR, DPI, Department of Lands and local government – encouraging representation of the tourism industry on regional NPW advisory committees – participating in the development of regional tourism plans. [In consultation with DTSR, DPI, DOP, DNR]	1
23. Work with local government, DOP and DTSR to establish zoning and development control plans, which will facilitate development of appropriate facilities outside of parks to service park visitors, such as visitor facilities, camping grounds and accommodation.	1
24. Participate in planning state and regional touring programs, including regional signposting and regional touring guides. [Action 1.1.10 Tourism Masterplan] [In consultation with RTA, TASAC, local councils]	1
25. Promote participation in voluntary conservation activities, such as bush regeneration, as a visitor attraction. [In consultation with DTSR, Taronga Zoo, Botanic Gardens Trust, Bushcare, Conservation Volunteers Australia]	1
26. Explore, with the private sector, appropriate opportunities for the provision of facilities, infrastructure and services compatible with park conservation.	1

**Outcome 3.2:
Partnership opportunities that recognise the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people and communities, while facilitating the appreciation of Aboriginal culture.**

Aboriginal communities have rights and responsibilities as the primary custodians and interpreters of their heritage. The NPWS recognises the unique relationship Aboriginal people have with the state’s land and waters. For many Aboriginal people, NSW parks play a fundamental role in their identity and cultural life. Aboriginal people may have particular responsibilities in relation to the land and access to country is important for maintaining and teaching culture, as well as maintaining identity and community wellbeing.

The NPWS will establish partnerships with Aboriginal people across the state to ensure parks are managed to provide Aboriginal peoples with the opportunity to continue practising traditional and contemporary culture in parks that are part of their country. The NPWS aims to work with Aboriginal communities to manage visitation in ways that respect Aboriginal culture and country. This may include working together to:

- acknowledge Aboriginal culture and country to ensure visitor awareness
- educate visitors on the Aboriginal cultural heritage of parks
- develop culturally appropriate information about parks and the promotion of parks
- improve Aboriginal access to parks for cultural activities
- manage visitation to culturally sensitive places, including managing tourism.

Visitation management will be consistent with the Indigenous Tourism Product Development Principles (Tourism NSW 2001). This means that:

- opportunities for Aboriginal participation in visitation management will be increased
- opportunities for visitors to experience Aboriginal culture will be developed with Aboriginal communities, to maintain product integrity and cultural authenticity
- when Aboriginal culture is the ‘product’, Aboriginal people will determine its content and interpretation
- contemporary as well as traditional values and customs will be acknowledged, in recognition of the living, dynamic nature of Aboriginal culture
- Aboriginal cultural tourism products will be wholly or substantially controlled by Aboriginal people, with benefits returned to Aboriginal people
- Indigenous providers will be encouraged to become accredited through programs such as Respecting Our Culture, improving the quality of visitor experiences and knowledge of the culture.

Actions		Priority
27.	Review and invest in the Aboriginal Discovery Program to provide more opportunities for training and employment.	1
28.	Involve NPW Aboriginal Heritage Advisory Council in visitation management and branch visitation management planning.	1
29.	Develop a range of partnerships for park visitor management with Aboriginal communities appropriate to local circumstances. This includes working together on education and interpretation of Aboriginal cultural heritage, Aboriginal access to country, managing access to culturally sensitive areas, and managing visitors to parks and tourism.	1
30.	Develop a policy framework for access to parks by Aboriginal people for cultural purposes.	1
31.	Investigate and support opportunities for providing external training in park values and management for Aboriginal guides. [In consultation with DTSR, DET & DAA]	2
32.	Work with Aboriginal communities in visitation management and the development of commercial services, including the identification of ‘key destinations’.	2
33.	Investigate opportunities for tourism ventures with Aboriginal communities in parks.	2

**Outcome 3.3:
Research partnerships lead to improved visitation management through improved knowledge.**

Visitation management will be improved through a better knowledge of:

- visitor needs, attitudes and satisfaction
- visitor understanding of natural and cultural heritage and its conservation
- actual and potential positive and negative impacts of visitation on parks
- economic contribution of parks to local and regional economies
- opportunities for partnerships with Aboriginal people and communities.

Actions		Priority
34.	Engage with research organisations to deliver on research priorities and education necessary for the effective implementation of Living Parks.	1

Definitions

Country is an area of land and its resources for which an Aboriginal person or community has a connection or responsibility.

Interpretation is a term used to describe the programs, activities and facilities aimed at giving visitors greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of the features and significance of areas reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act.

NSW parks encompasses the different categories of protected areas that are managed by the NPWS, including nature reserves, national parks, state conservation areas, regional parks, Aboriginal areas, historic sites, karst conservation reserves, marine parks (which are managed jointly by the NPWS and Department of Primary Industries through the Marine Parks Authority) and wilderness.

Principles of ecologically sustainable development refers to section 6 (2) of the *Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991*, which requires the effective integration of economic and environmental considerations in decision-making processes. According to the Act, ecologically sustainable development can be achieved through the implementation of the following principles and programs:

- (a) the precautionary principle — if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:
 - (i) careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment
 - (ii) an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options.
- (b) inter-generational equity — the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations
- (c) conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity — conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration
- (d) improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms — environmental factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services.

Principles of multiculturalism, which were established by the Community Relations Commission, are:

1. all individuals in NSW should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of public life
2. all individuals and public institutions should respect and make provision for the culture, language and religion of others within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the primary language
3. all individuals should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programs provided or administered by the Government of NSW
4. all NSW public institutions should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets of the state's population as a valuable resource and promote this resource to maximise the development of the state.

Recreation in parks is activity-focused and often involves a high degree of self-organisation and independence. Examples include self-reliant bushwalking, swimming at the beach, skiing at an alpine resort and mountain-bike riding in a national park. Informal recreation users make up the majority of visitors to public land.

Tourism in parks is a subset of recreation and involves a similar range of outdoor activities, often motivated by the participant's desire to experience new and different destinations and environments. This is commonly referred to as 'nature-based tourism'. It includes recognised niche areas of tourism, such as adventure tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism and Indigenous tourism. Tourism often involves a significant travel component and a commercially serviced component. Examples include viewing dolphins from a tour boat, guided white-water rafting, visiting historic places or bushwalking as part of a guided tour, or sightseeing as part of an extended holiday.

Glossary and abbreviations

Branch	There are five branches within the Parks and Wildlife Division of DEC, that were previously known as NPWS directorates: Central, Southern, Northern, Western and Reserve and Wildlife Conservation branches.
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
DEC	Department of Environment and Conservation
DET	Department of Education and Training
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
DOP	Department of Planning
DPI	Department of Primary Industries (Forests NSW)
DSRD	Department of State and Regional Development
DTSR	Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation
MPA	Marine Parks Authority
NPWAHAC	National Parks and Wildlife Aboriginal Heritage Advisory Council
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service (now part of DEC)
PWD	Parks and Wildlife Division of DEC (also known as the National Parks and Wildlife Service)
RTA	Roads and Traffic Authority
TASAC	Tourist Attraction Signposting Assessment Committee

Kosciuszko alpine resorts: a context for the future development of NSW alpine resorts

The NSW Government recognises the vital importance of the alpine resorts, which occupy less than one per cent of Kosciuszko National Park, to the state and to the Alpine Region within which they are located.

Each year, these resorts provide enjoyment for over one million visitors and make a significant contribution to the economy of the Alpine Region and the state of New South Wales. It is important that this contribution is acknowledged and the success of the state's only alpine resorts fostered.

The NSW Government is committed to fostering sustainable and prosperous alpine resorts. Future planning of the resorts will uphold the Government's longstanding commitment to protect the natural and cultural values of Kosciuszko National Park and ensure development is carried out in an ecologically sustainable manner.

This commitment will also ensure the alpine resorts are developed and operated in a manner that protects the exceptional natural and cultural values of the Kosciuszko National Park and, in particular, the alpine and subalpine areas within which the resorts are located.

The principles of ecologically sustainable development will underpin decision-making. This commitment will be supported by rigorous assessment processes, environmental management systems and state of the environment reporting.

The NSW Government will work with resort operators to showcase sound environmental practice and sustainable design that respects the unique features of the area so that they are enjoyed and protected for present and future generations.

The NSW Government will have two interlinked plans to manage the alpine resorts. Together, the two plans provide an integrated planning system for the alpine resorts within the Kosciuszko National Park.

The plans are based on a vision that seeks to develop viable, high quality resorts; provide opportunities and benefits for the regional community; and ensure that all visitors have the opportunity to enjoy a range of recreational activities in the unique alpine environment, while acquiring a memorable experience and understanding of the significance of the Kosciuszko National Park.

The Department of Environment and Conservation has prepared a new Plan of Management for the Kosciuszko National Park. This plan provides for the management of the whole of the park.

The Department of Planning has prepared a draft alpine resorts plan. This plan will govern the management of land use and development within Kosciuszko National Park's alpine resorts.

In summary, the new planning framework for the Kosciuszko National Park will balance the need to conserve the exceptional natural and cultural values of the park with the need to foster a robust tourism industry that benefits the region and the state of New South Wales.

References

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DEC 2004, *DEC corporate plan*

DEC 2004, *DEC annual report 2003–04*

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Legislation

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Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991

Wilderness Act 1987

Marine Parks Act 1997



Department of
Environment and Conservation (NSW)



Living Parks – Conserve, Explore, Experience